European metrology research and development programme 2009-2017

2008/0230(COD) - 16/04/2012 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents an interim evaluation of the European Metrology Research Programme, established by No 912/2009/EC, when the EU agreed to participate in a joint research programme called European Metrology Research Programme – EMRP, with a contribution of up to EUR 200 million for the period 2009-2017, equivalent to the contributions of the 22 Participating States. The participating States agreed to propose EURAMET e.V.3 as dedicated implementation structure to implement the EMRP. The dedicated implementation structure should be the recipient of the Union financial contribution and should ensure the efficient execution of the EMRP.

The core activity of the EMRP consists of funding multi-partner trans-national projects addressing research, technological development, training and dissemination activities (EMRP projects). In view of the concentrated capacities in metrology, the core part of the EMRP projects is executed by National Metrology Institutes and Designated Institutes (namely, specialist institutes responsible for certain national standards and associated services that are not covered by the activities of the National Metrology Institutes) from the participating States. In order to increase and diversify capacities in metrology, the EMRP also funds several researcher grant schemes that complement the EMRP projects.

An expert panel supported the Commission in this evaluation with its findings and issued the interim evaluation report which provides an in-depth analysis of EMRP concerning the progress towards the initial objectives as well as recommendations on the most appropriate ways to further enhance integration and the quality and efficiency of this initiative.

Findings: having started in 2009, the EMRP operational performance has achieved maturity as a joint research programme between 22 Participating States, implemented by EURAMET e.V. The integration between the participating national programmes is considered high. The Commission will therefore continue to support the current programme as provided in the EMRP Decision.

The EMRP is performing well after 3 years to most of its initial operational objectives in what concerns nearly 85% of the EMRP resources, namely the pooling of excellence in metrology research. However **there are significant gaps between expectation and reality in relation to three qualitative impact indicators:**

- Capacity building: the Panel states that the EMRP is not having the desired effect in terms of capacity building in those countries with limited or no metrology research capability. While some countries have taken advantage of the programme to build capacity in strategic areas of interest, the capacity gap with the most research-intensive countries seems to increase. It should also be noted that the mechanisms in the existing EMRP related to opening of the system to the best science and the capacity building have been based mainly on the grant system within EMRP. It seems that the financial capacity of the grant system itself is not the major bottleneck. The Panel recalled that the existing EMRP is designed by the EMRP Decision as a research programme striving towards scientific excellence with its specific operational processes and financial instruments and the running EMRP cannot easily support the complex issue of capacity building. In this respect the Panel has given interesting and important recommendations for a potential longer-term future of the EMRP. The Commission fully endorses the recommendation to use expert facilitators to foster better inclusion of those countries with limited metrology research capacity with the aim of closing the gap with the more advanced countries.

- Interaction with scientific community: in contrast to the great success of pooling excellence in the core metrology community itself, the opening of the system to the best science has so far been limited. The Panel reports a clear external perception that the EMRP still seems to be rather closed to the wider European research community. The Commission therefore encourages EURAMET e.V. to explore ways to better use the grant schemes to foster links with the best centres of excellence across Europe.

- Mobility: a major barrier for the small and developing national metrology institutes is their limited capability to participate with expert staff in EMRP projects and their limited financial resources. The Panel is of the opinion that this creates a strong risk that the existing gap in competence and capabilities between the well established, big metrology institutes and the developing, small metrology institutes will become bigger instead of smaller.

The Commission shares the Panel's view that the capacity gap between the Participating Countries seems to increase in some cases and agrees with the Panel opinion that the **Researcher Grant System could be used more effectively** to increase further the possibilities for countries with limited metrology research capacities. The Commission fully endorses the Panel recommendation to explore the degree of flexibility that could be applied to the management of the mobility grants to overcome the relocation barrier.

EURAMET e.V. and the EMRP Committee as the highest instances in the EMRP governance are invited to make all necessary efforts to improve this situation in the remaining period of the programme. While no changes to the initial Decision are considered necessary the above mentioned Panel recommendations should be implemented by EURAMET e.V. as well as any additional measure that EURAMET members may consider useful or necessary to improve the capacity building, the interaction with the wider scientific community and the mobility within the EMRP.

Lastly, the Commission will engage with EURAMET e.V. in preliminary discussions on the possible follow up for the current EMRP in the context of the next programming period, without prejudice to the final decision about HORIZON 2020 and the EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework, taking into consideration the wider political context of the Europe 2020 strategy.